

### Cigarette Smoking

Smoking has serious long-term effects on health, including the risk of nicotine addiction, smoking-related diseases, and premature death. Over 80 percent of adults who are addicted to tobacco began smoking as adolescents (1). It has been estimated that tobacco-related illnesses will cause the premature death of approximately 5 million persons who were 17 years or younger in 1995 (2).

- In 1999 more than one-third of all high school students reported smoking on one or more days in the previous 30 days (current smoking), and nearly 17 percent reported smoking frequently (that is, on 20 or more days).
- The percent of students who reported current smoking increased with grade level, as did the percent who reported frequent smoking.
- Many adolescents begin smoking before reaching 9th grade. One-fourth (25 percent) of students had smoked a whole cigarette before 13 years of age.
- Rates of smoking differ substantially between racial and ethnic groups. In 1999 non-Hispanic white and Hispanic students were more likely to smoke than non-Hispanic black students. Non-Hispanic white students were more likely to be frequent smokers than Hispanic and non-Hispanic black students.
- Among non-Hispanic black students, females were less likely to smoke than males. In contrast, among Hispanic and non-Hispanic white students smoking rates did not differ significantly for males and females.
- Smoking among adolescents has increased in recent years. In 1999 the prevalence of current cigarette smoking was 27 percent higher than in 1991; current cigarette smoking increased 56 percent among black students, 29 percent among Hispanic students, and 25 percent among white students (3, 4).
- Adolescents are at risk from other forms of tobacco use as well. In 1999, 8 percent of students

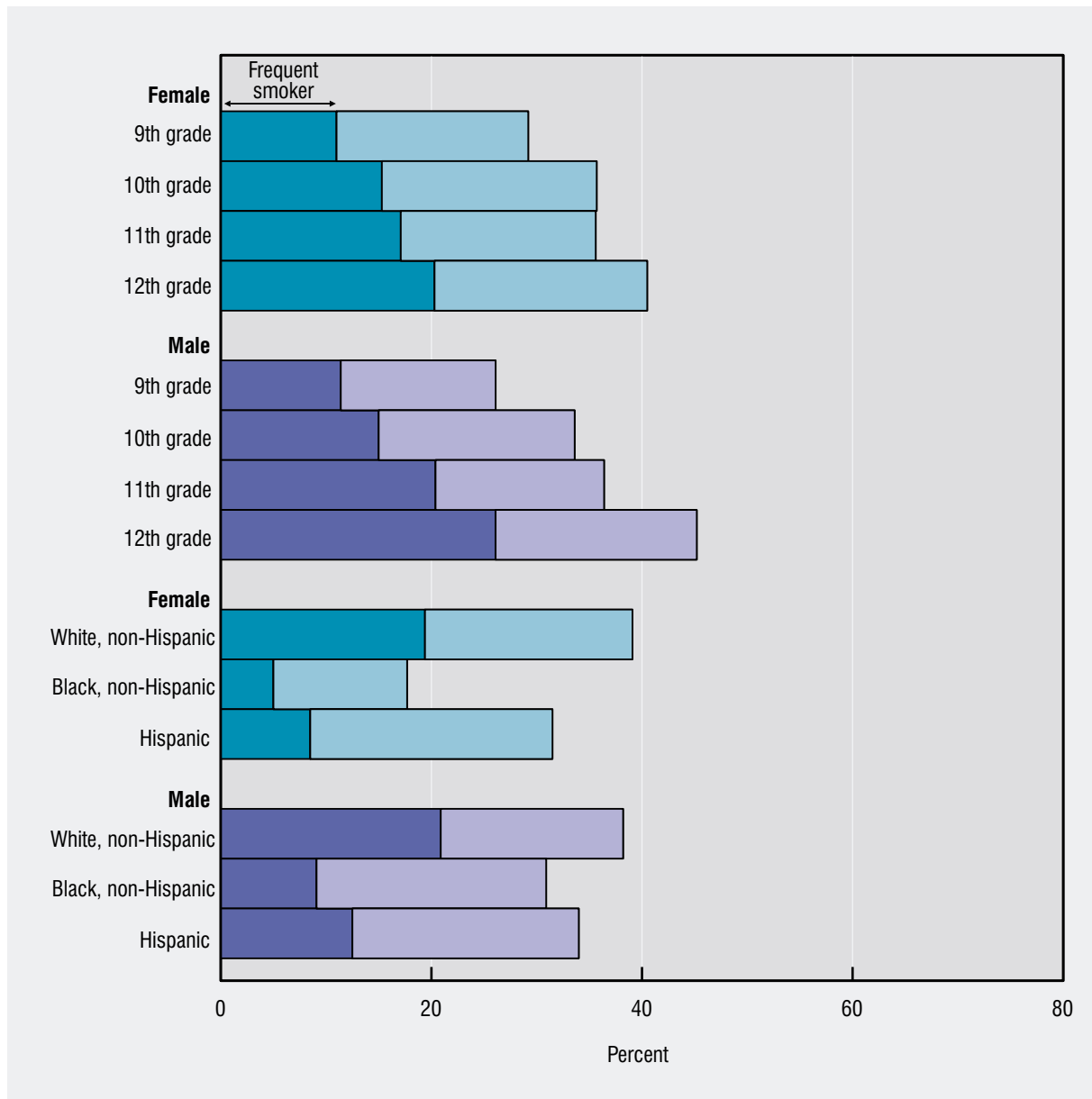
used smokeless tobacco in the past month (14 percent of male students and 1 percent of female students) and 18 percent smoked cigars (25 percent of male students and 10 percent of female students) (3).

- Tobacco use is the single leading preventable cause of death in the United States (1). A Healthy People 2010 critical adolescent objectives calls for a reduction in the proportion of young people in grades 9–12 who have used tobacco products; this measure is also a Leading Health Indicator (5).

### References

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Preventing tobacco use among young people: A report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, Georgia: Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health. 1994.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Projected smoking-related deaths among youth—United States. Atlanta, Georgia: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. MMWR 45:971–4. 1996.
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Youth Risk Behavior Survey. 1999.
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Tobacco use among high school students—United States. Atlanta, Georgia: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. MMWR 47: 229–33. 1998.
5. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Healthy People 2010 (Conference Edition, in Two Volumes). Washington: January 2000.

**Figure 26. Current cigarette smoking among students in grades 9–12 by sex, grade level, race, and Hispanic origin: United States, 1999**



NOTES: Current cigarette smoking is defined as having smoked cigarettes on one or more days of the 30 days preceding the survey; frequent cigarette smoking is defined as having smoked cigarettes on 20 or more days of the 30 days preceding the survey. See Technical Notes for survey methods. See Data Table for data points graphed.

SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS).